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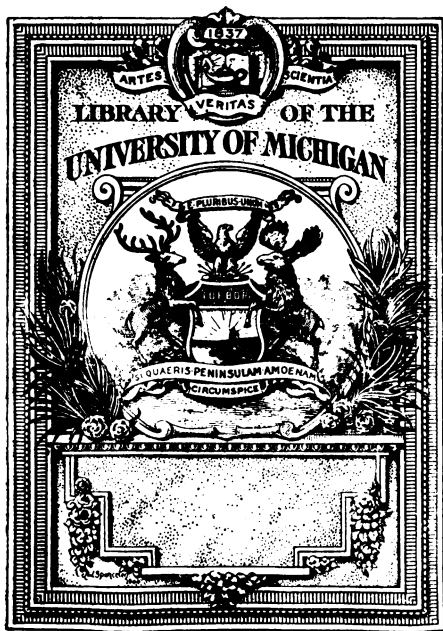
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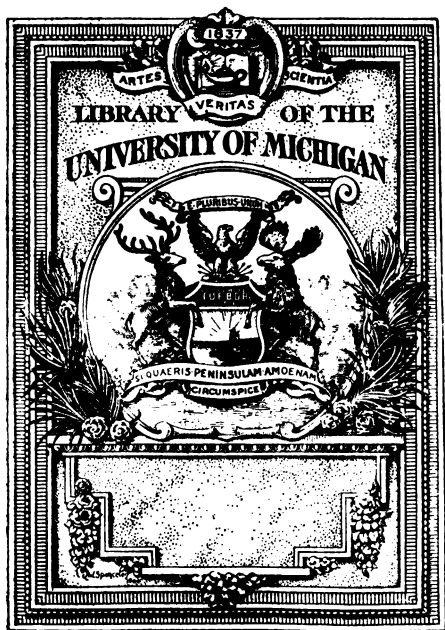
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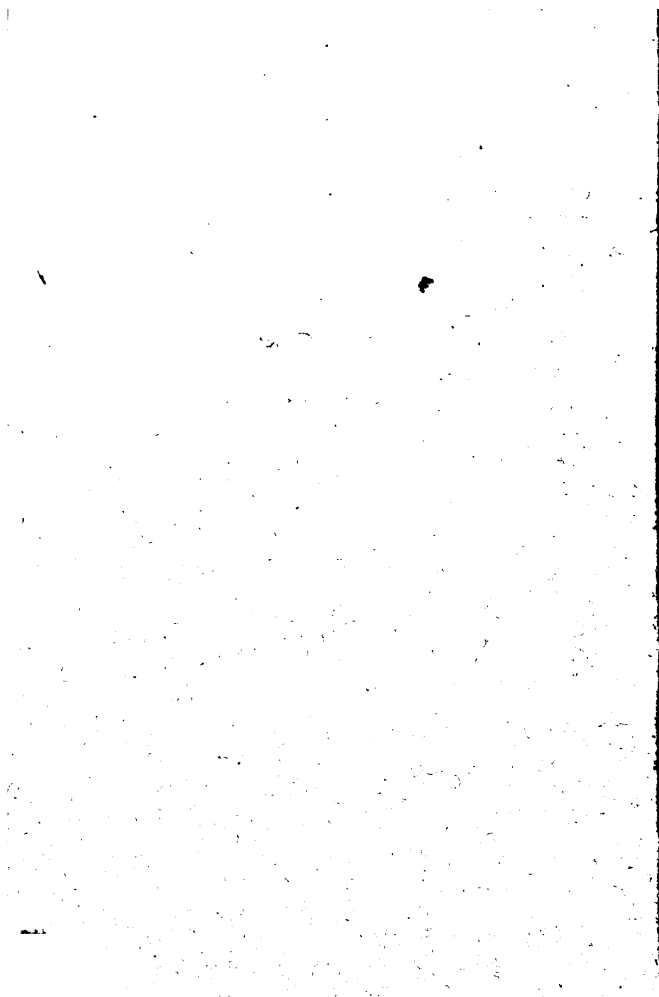
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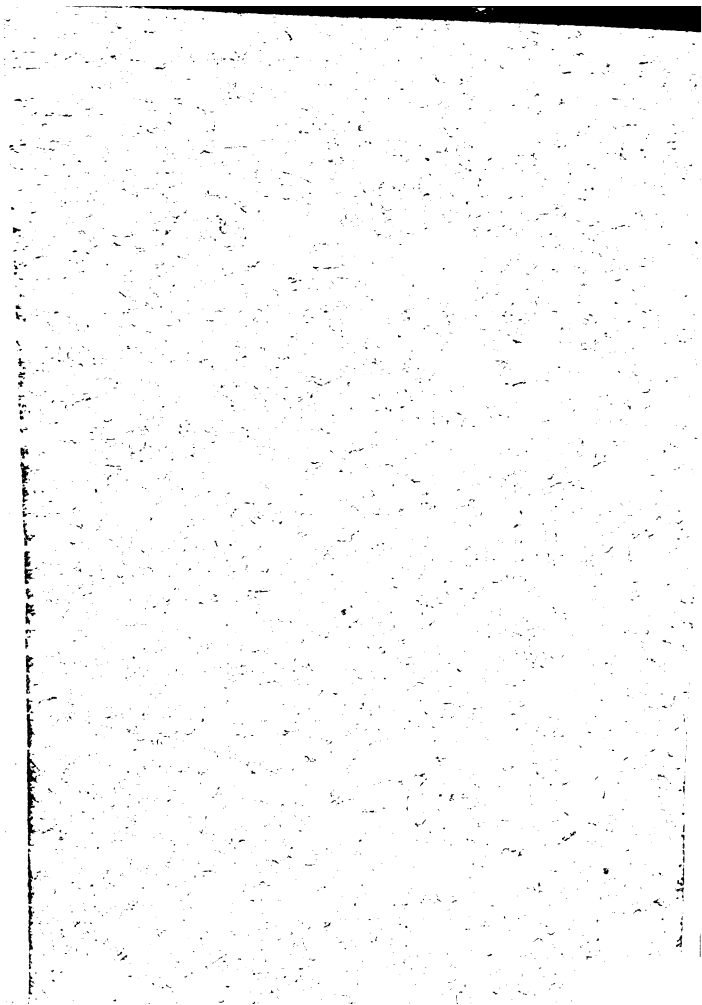
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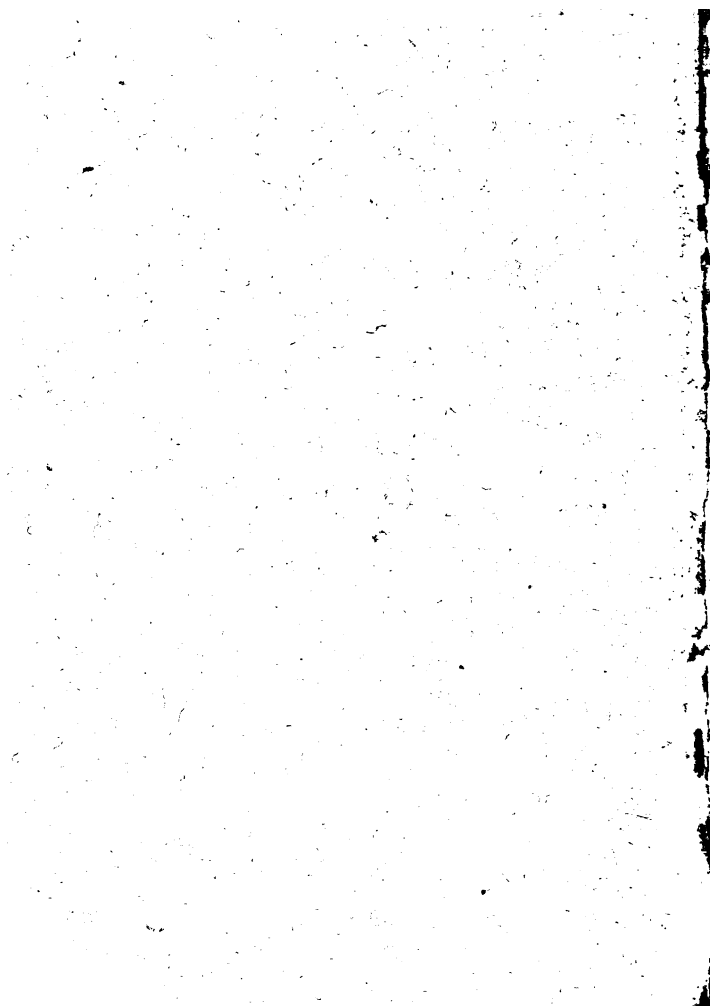


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VISION
Sir Launfal.

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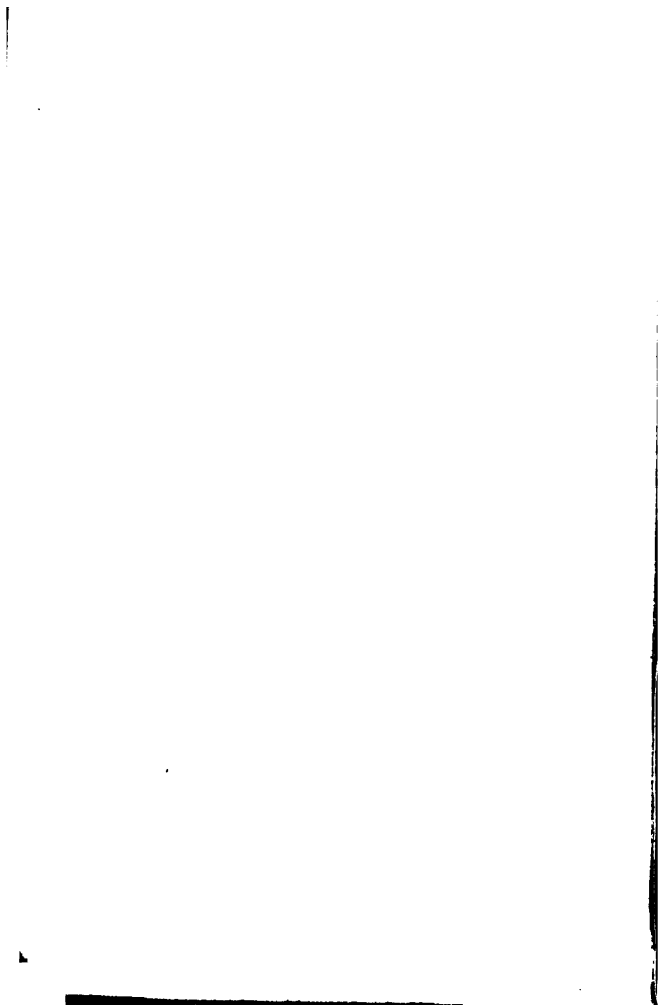


*James
R.
Lowell.*

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The Vision of Sir Launfal



The Vision of Sir Launfal

PRELUDE TO PART FIRST

OVER his keys the musing organ-
ist,
Beginning doubtfully and far away,
First lets his fingers wander as they
list,
And builds a bridge from Dream-
land for his lay ;
Then, as the touch of his loved instru-
ment
Gives hope and fervour, nearer draws
his theme,
First guessed by faint auroral flushes
sent
Along the wavering vista of his
dream.

✱ The Vision of Sir Launfal

Not only around our infancy
Doth heaven with all its splendours
lie ;
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
We Sinais climb and know it not ;

Over our manhood bend the skies ;
Against our fallen and traitor lives
The great winds utter prophecies ;
With our faint hearts the mountain
strives ;
Its arms outstretched, the druid wood
Waits with its benedicite ;
And to our age's drowsy blood
Still shouts the inspiring sea.

Earth gets its price for what Earth
gives us ;
The beggar is taxed for a corner to
die in,

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❧

The priest hath his fee who comes and
shrives us,

We bargain for the graves we lie in ;
At the Devil's booth are all things
sold,

Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of
gold ;

For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we earn with a whole soul's
tasking :

'Tis heaven alone that is given
away.

'Tis only God may be had for the
asking ;

There is no price set on the lavish
summer ;

And June may be had by the poorest
comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June ?
Then, if ever, come perfect days ;

* The Vision of Sir Launfal

Then Heaven tries the earth if it be
in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear
lays :
Whether we look, or whether we
listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it
glisten ;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches
and towers,
And, grasping blindly above it for
light,
Climbs to a soul in grass and
flowers ;
The flush of life may well be seen
Thrilling back over hills and valleys ;
The cowslip startles in meadows green,
The buttercup catches the sun in its
chalice,

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

And there's never a leaf or a blade too
mean

To be some happy creature's palace ;
The little bird sits at his door in the
sun,

Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun

With the deluge of summer it re-
ceives ;

His mate feels the eggs beneath her
wings,

And the heart in her dumb breast
flutters and sings ;

He sings to the wide world, and she to
her nest, —

In the nice ear of Nature which song
is the best ?

Now is the high-tide of the year,
And whatever of life hath ebbd away

*** The Vision of Sir Launfal**

Comes flooding back, with a ripply
cheer,
Into every bare inlet and creek and
bay ;
Now the heart is so full that a drop
overfills it,
We are happy now because God so
wills it ;
No matter how barren the past may
have been,
'Tis enough for us now that the leaves
are green ;
We sit in the warm shade and feel
right well
How the sap creeps up and the blos-
soms swell ;
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot
help knowing
That skies are clear and grass is grow-
ing ;

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

The breeze comes whispering in our ear,
That dandelions are blossoming near,
That maize has sprouted, that
streams are flowing,

That the river is bluer than the sky,
That the robin is plastering his house
hard by ;

And if the breeze kept the good news
back,

For other couriers we should not lack ;
We could guess it all by yon heifer's
lowing, —

And hark ! how clear bold chanticleer,
Warmed with the new wine of the year,
Tells all in his lusty crowing !

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not
how ;

Everything is happy now,
Everything is upward striving ;

*** The Vision of Sir Launfal**

'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green or skies to be
blue, —

'Tis the natural way of living :
Who knows whither the clouds have
fled ?

In the unscarred heaven they leave
no wake ;
And the eyes forget the tears they have
shed,

The heart forgets its sorrow and ache ;
The soul partakes the season's youth,
And the sulphurous rifts of passion
and woe

Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and
smooth,

Like burnt-out craters healed with
snow.

What wonder if Sir Launfal now
Remembered the keeping of his vow ?

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❄

PART FIRST

I.

“My golden spurs now bring to me,
And bring to me my richest mail,
For to-morrow I go over land and
sea

In search of the Holy Grail;
Shall never a bed for me be spread,
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,
Till I begin my vow to keep;
Here on the rushes will I sleep,
And perchance there may come a vision true

Ere day create the world anew.”

Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew
dim,

Slumber fell like a cloud on him,
And into his soul the vision flew.

* The Vision of Sir Launfal

II.

The crows flapped over by twos and
threes,
In the pool drowsed the cattle up to
their knees,
The birds sang as if it were
The one day of summer in all the
year,
And the very leaves seemed to sing on
the trees :
The castle alone in the landscape lay
Like an outpost of winter, dull and
gray ;
'Twas the proudest hall in the North
Countree,
And never its gates might opened be,
Save to lord or lady of high degree ;
Summer besieged it on every side,

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

But the churlish stone her assaults
defied;
She could not scale the chilly wall,
Though around it for leagues her
pavilions tall
Stretched left and right,
Over the hills and out of sight;
Green and broad was every tent,
And out of each a murmur went
Till the breeze fell off at night.

III.

The drawbridge dropped with a surly
clang,
And through the dark arch a charger
sprang,
Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight,
In his gilded mail, that flamed so
bright

✱ The Vision of Sir Launfal

It seemed the dark castle had gathered all
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot
over its wall

In his siege of three hundred sum-
mers long,
And, binding them all in one blazing
sheaf,
Had cast them forth : so young and
strong,
And lightsome as a locust-leaf,
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his un-
scarred mail,
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

IV.

It was morning on hill and stream
and tree,
And morning in the young knight's
heart ;

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❄

Only the castle moodily
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free.
And gloomed by itself apart ;
The season brimmed all other things up
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's
cup.

v.

As Sir Launfal made morn through the
darksome gate,
He was ware of a leper, crouched by
the same,
Who begged with his hand and moaned
as he sate ;
And a loathing over Sir Launfal
came ;
The sunshine went out of his soul with
a thrill,
The flesh 'neath his armour did
shrink and crawl,

*** The Vision of Sir Launfal**

And midway its leap his heart stood
still

Like a frozen waterfall ;
For this man, so foul and bent of
stature,
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,
And seemed the one blot on the sum-
mer morn, —
So he tossed him a piece of gold in
scorn.

VI.

The leper raised not the gold from the
dust :

“ Better to me the poor man’s crust,
Better the blessing of the poor,
Though I turn me empty from his
door ;
That is no true alms which the hand
can hold ;

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❄

He gives nothing but worthless gold
Who gives from a sense of duty ;
But he who gives but a slender mite,
And gives to that which is out of
sight,
That thread of the all-sustaining
Beauty
Which runs through all and doth all
unite, —
The hand cannot clasp the whole of
his alms,
The heart outstretches its eager palms,
For a god goes with it and makes it
store
To the soul that was starving in dark-
ness before."

* The Vision of Sir Launfal

PRELUDE TO PART SECOND

Down swept the chill wind from the
 mountain peak,
From the snow five thousand sum-
 mers old;
On open wold and hill-top bleak
 It had gathered all the cold,
And whirled it like sleet on the wan-
 derer's cheek;
It carried a shiver everywhere
From the unleafed boughs and pas-
 tures bare;
The little brook heard and built a roof
'Neath which he could house him win-
 ter-proof;
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams
He groined his arches and matched his
 beams;

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❄

Slender and clear were his crystal spars
As the lashes of light that trim the
stars :

He sculptured every summer delight
In his halls and chambers out of sight ;
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt
Down through a frost-leaved forest-
crypt,

Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed
trees

Bending to counterfeit a breeze ;
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew
But silvery mosses that downward
grew ;

Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief
With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf ;
Sometimes it was simply smooth and
clear

For the gladness of heaven to shine
through, and here

✱ The Vision of Sir Launfal

He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops
And hung them thickly with diamond
drops,

Which crystallled the beams of moon
and sun,

And made a star of every one :

No mortal builder's most rare device
Could match this winter-palace of ice ;
'Twas as if every image that mirrored
lay

In his depths serene through the sum-
mer day,

Each flitting shadow of earth and sky,
Lest the happy model should be lost,
Had been mimicked in fairy masonry
By the elfin builders of the frost.

Within the hall are song and laughter,
The cheeks of Christmas glow red
and jolly,

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❁

And sprouting is every corbel and rafter
With lightsome green of ivy and
holly ;
Through the deep gulf of the chimney
wide
Wallows the Yule-log's roaring tide ;
The broad flame-pennons droop and
flap
And belly and tug as a flag in the
wind :
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned
sap,
Hunted to death in its galleries
blind ;
And swift little troops of silent sparks,
Now pausing, now scattering away
as in fear,
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled
darks
Like herds of startled deer.

✱ The Vision of Sir Launfal

But the wind without was eager and
sharp,

Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a
harp,

And rattles and wrings

The icy strings,

Singing in dreary monotone,

A Christmas carol of its own,

Whose burden still, as he might
guess,

Was — "Shelterless, shelterless, shel-
terless!"

The voice of the seneschal flared like
a torch

As he shouted the wanderer away from
the porch,

And he sat in the gateway and saw all
night

The great hall-fire so cheery and
bold,

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

Through the window-slits of the
castle old,
Built out its piers of ruddy light
Against the drift of the cold.

✻ The Vision of Sir Launfal

PART SECOND

I.

There was never a leaf on bush or
tree,
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly ;
The river was dumb and could not
speak,
For the frost's swift shuttles its
shroud had spun ;
A single crow on the tree-top bleak
From his shining feathers shed off
the cold sun ;
Again it was morning, but shrunk and
cold,
As if her veins were sapless and old,
And she rose up decrepitly
For a last dim look at earth and
sea.

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

II.

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard
gate,
For another heir in his earldom sate ;
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,
He came back from seeking the Holy
Grail ;
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,
No more on his surcoat was blazoned
the cross,
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

III.

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbèd air,
For it was just at the Christmas time ;
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier
clime,

✻ The Vision of Sir Launfal

And sought for a shelter from cold and
snow

In the light and warmth of long ago ;
He sees the snake-like caravan crawl
O'er the edge of the desert, black and
small,

Then nearer and nearer, till one by
one

He can count the camels in the sun,
As over the red-hot sands they pass
To where, in its slender necklace of
grass,

The little spring laughed and leapt in
the shade,

And with its own self like an infant
played,

And waved its signal of palms.

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

IV.

“For Christ’s sweet sake, I beg an
alms;” —

The happy camels may reach the
spring,

But Sir Launfal sees naught save the
grewsome thing,

The leper, lank as the rain-blanchèd
bone,

That cowers beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern
seas

In the desolate horror of his disease.

V.

And Sir Launfal said, — “I behold in
thee

An image of Him who died on the
tree;

✱ The Vision of Sir Launfal

The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified,
Shining and tall and fair and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate, —
Himself the Gate whereby men can
Enter the temple of God in Man.

VIII.

His words were shed softer than leaves
from the pine,
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows
on the brine,
Which mingle their softness and quiet
in one
With the shaggy unrest they float
down upon ;
And the voice that was calmer than
silence said,

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

“Lo it is I, be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy
 Grail;
Behold, it is here,—this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but
 now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the
 tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another’s
 need;
Not what we give, but what we
 share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds
 three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbour, and
 me.”

✱ The Vision of Sir Launfal

IX.

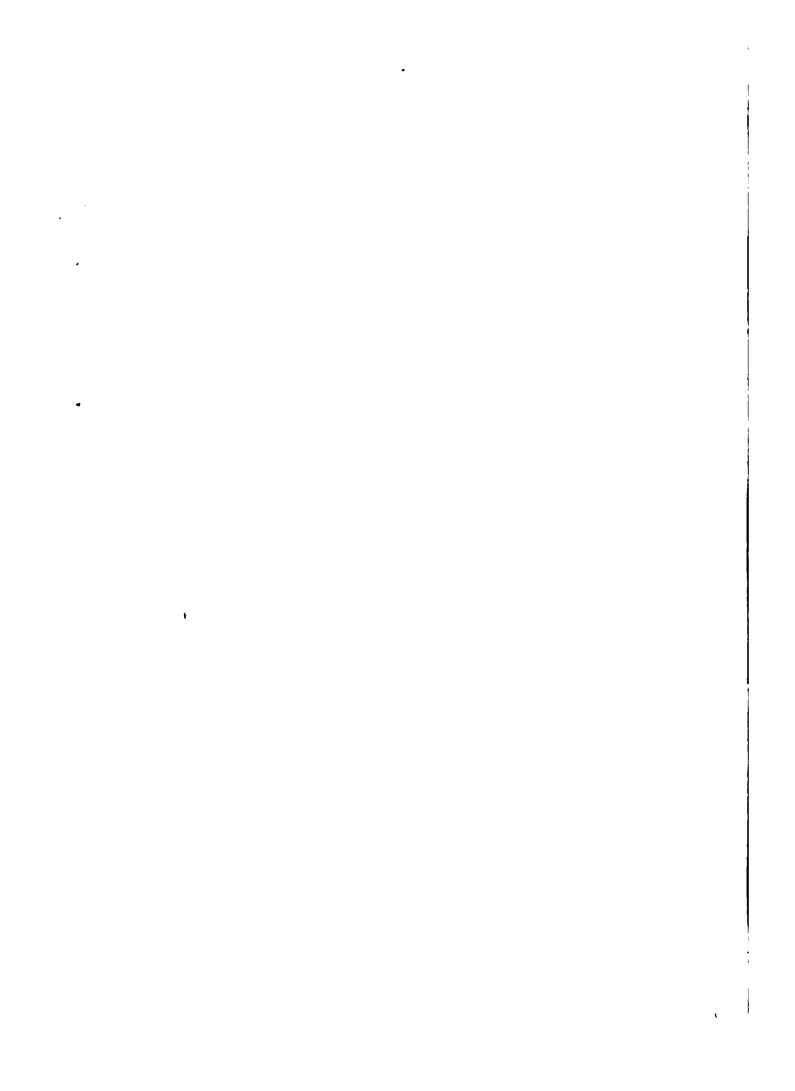
Sir Launfal awoke as from a swoond : —
“ The Grail in my castle here is found !
Hang my idle armour up on the wall,
Let it be the spider’s banquet-hall ;
He must be fenced with stronger mail
Who would seek and find the Holy
Grail.”

X.

The castle gate stands open now,
And the wanderer is welcome to the
hall
As the hangbird is to the elm-tree
bough ;
No longer scowl the turrets tall,
The summer’s long siege at last is o’er ;
When the first poor outcast went in at
the door,

The Vision of Sir Launfal ❀

She entered with him in disguise,
And mastered the fortress by surprise ;
There is no spot she loves so well on
 ground,
She lingers and smiles there the whole
 year round ;
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's
 land
Has hall and bower at his command ;
And there's no poor man in the North
 Countree
But is lord of the earldom as much
 as he.



The Bobolink

A NACREON of the meadow,
Drunk with the joy of spring!
Beneath the tall pine's voiceful shadow
I lie and drink thy jargonings;
My soul is full with melodies,
One drop would overflow it,
And send the tears into mine eyes —
But what carest thou to know it?
Thy heart is free as mountain air,
And of thy lays thou hast no care,
Scattering them gayly everywhere,
Happy, unconscious poet!

Upon a tuft of meadow grass,
While thy loved-one tends the nest,
Thou swayest as the breezes pass,
Unburdening thine o'erfull breast

✱ The Bobolink

Of the crowded songs that fill it,
Just as joy may choose to will it.
Lord of thy love and liberty,
The blithest bird of merry May,
Thou turnest thy bright eye on me,
That says as plain as eye can say —
“ Here sit we in the sunny weather,
I and my modest mate together ;
Whatever your wise thoughts may be,
Under that gloomy old pine-tree,
We do not value them a feather.”

Now, leaving earth and me behind,
Thou beatest up against the wind,
Or, floating slowly down before it,
Above thy grass-hid nest thou flutterest
And thy bridal love-song utterest,
Raining showers of music o'er it,
Weary never, still thou trillest,
Spring-glad some lays,

The Bobolink ❀

As of moss-rimmed water brooks
Murmuring through pebbly nooks
In quiet summer days.
My heart with happiness thou fillest,
I seem again to be a boy
Watching thee, gay, blithesome lover,
O'er the bending grass-tops hover,
Quivering thy wings for joy.
There's something in the apple-blossom,
The greening grass and bobolink's song,
That wakes again within my bosom
Feelings which have slumbered long.
As long, long years ago I wandered,
I seem to wander even yet.
The hours the idle schoolboy squandered,
The man would die ere he'd forget.
O hours that frosty eld deemed wasted,
Nodding his gray head toward my books,
I dearer prize the lore I tasted

✱ The Bobolink

With you, among the trees and brooks,
Than all that I have gained since then
From learned books or study-withered
men.

Nature, thy soul was one with mine,
And, as a sister by a younger brother
Is loved, each flowing to the other,
Such love for me was thine.

Or wert thou not more like a gentle
mother

With sympathy and loving power to
heal,

Against whose heart my throbbing head
I'd lay

And moan my childish sorrows all
away,

Till calm and holiness would o'er me
steal?

Was not the golden sunset a dear
friend?

The Bobolink ❀

Found I no kindness in the silent moon,
And the green trees, whose tops did
 sway and bend,
Low singing evermore their pleasant
 tune?
Felt I no heart in dim and solemn
 woods —
No loved-one's voice in lonely soli-
 tudes!
Yes, yes! unhoodwinked then my
 spirit's eyes,
Blind leaders had not *taught me* to be
 wise.

Dear hours! which now again I
 over-live,
Hearing and seeing with the ears and
 eyes
Of childhood, ye were bees, that to the
 hive

✱ The Bobolink

Of my young heart came laden with
rich prize,
Gathered in fields and woods and sunny
dells, to be
My spirit's food in days more wintery.
Yea, yet again ye come! ye come!
And, like a child once more at home
After long sojourning in alien climes,
I lie upon my mother's breast,
Feeling the blessedness of rest,
And dwelling in the light of other times.

O ye whose living is not *Life*,
Whose dying is but death,
Long, empty toil and petty strife,
Rounded with loss of breath!
Go, look on Nature's countenance,
Drink in the blessing of her glance;
Look on the sunset, hear the wind,
The cataract, the awful thunder;

The Bobolink ❄

Go, worship by the sea ;
Then, and then only, shall ye find,
With ever growing wonder,
Man is not all in all to ye ;
Go with a meek and humble soul,
Then shall the scales of self unroll
From off your eyes — the weary packs
Drop from your heavy-laden backs ;
And ye shall see,
With reverent and hopeful eyes,
Glowing with new-born energies,
How great a thing it is to BE !

My Love

NOT as all other women are
Is she that to my soul is dear ;
Her glorious fancies come from far
Beneath the silver evening-star,
And yet her heart is ever near.

Great feelings hath she of her own
Which lesser souls may never know ;
God giveth them to her alone,
And sweet they are as any tone
Wherewith the wind may choose to
blow.

Yet in herself she dwelleth not,
Although no home were half so fair ;
No simplest duty is forgot,

✱ My Love

Life hath no dim and lonely spot
That doth not in her sunshine share.

She doeth little kindnesses,
Which most leave undone, or despise,
For naught that sets one heart at ease,
And giveth happiness or peace,
Is low-esteemed in her eyes.

She hath no scorn of common things
And, though she seem of other birth,
Round us her heart entwines and clings,
And patiently she folds her wings
To tread the humble paths of earth.

Blessing she is : God made her so,
And deeds of week-day holiness
Fall from her noiseless as the snow,
Nor hath she ever chanced to know
That aught were easier than to bless.

My Love ❀

She is most fair, and thereunto
Her life doth rightly harmonise ;
Feeling or thought that was not true
Ne'er made less beautiful the blue
Unclouded heaven of her eyes.

On Nature she doth muse and brood
With such a still and love-clear eye —
She is so gentle and so good —
The very flowers in the wood
Do bless her with their sympathy.

She is a woman : one in whom
The spring-time of her childish years
Hath never lost its fresh perfume,
Though knowing well that life hath
 room
For many blights and many tears.

And youth in her a home will find,
Where he may dwell eternally ;

*** My Love**

Her soul is not of that weak kind
Which better love the life behind
Than that which is, or is to be.

I love her with a love as still
As a broad river's peaceful might,
Which, by high tower and lowly mill,
Goes wandering at its own will,
And yet doth ever flow aright.

And, on its full, deep breast serene,
Like quiet isles my duties lie;
It flows around them and between,
And makes them fresh and fair and
green,
Sweet homes wherein to live and die.

The Beggar

A BEGGAR through the world am I,
From place to place I wander
by ; —

Fill up my pilgrim's scrip for me,
For Christ's sweet sake and charity !

A little of thy steadfastness,
Rounded with leafy gracefulness,
Old oak, give me —
That the world's blasts may round me
blow,
And I yield gently to and fro,
While my stout-hearted trunk below
And firm-set roots unmoved be.

Some of thy stern, unyielding might,
Enduring still through day and night

✱ The Beggar

Rude tempest-shock and withering
 blight —

That I may keep at bay
The changeful April sky of chance
And the strong tide of circumstance —
Give me old granite gray.

Some of thy mournfulness serene,
Some of thy never-dying green,
Put in this scrip of mine —
That griefs may fall like snowflakes
 light,
And deck me in a robe of white
Ready to be an angel bright —
O sweetly-mournful pine.

A little of thy merriment,
Of thy sparkling, light content,
Give me my cheerful brook —
That I may still be full of glee

The Beggar ❀

And gladsomeness, where'er I be,
Though fickle fate hath prisoned me
In some neglected nook.

Ye have been very kind and good
To me, since I've been in the wood ;
Ye have gone nigh to fill my heart,
But good-bye, kind friends, every one,
I've far to go ere set of sun ;
Of all good things I would have part,
The day was high ere I could start,
And so my journey's scarce begun.

Heaven help me ! how could I for-
get
To beg of thee, dear violet !
Some of thy modesty,
That flowers here as well, unseen,
As if before the world thou'dst been,
O give, to strengthen me.

The Sirens

THE sea is lonely, the sea is dreary,
The sea is restless and uneasy ;
Thou seekest quiet, thou art weary.
Wandering thou knowest not
whither ; —

Our little isle is green and breezy,
Come and rest thee ! O come hither,
Come to this peaceful home of ours,
Where evermore

The low west-wind creeps panting up
the shore

To be at rest among the flowers ;
Full of rest, the green moss lifts,
As the dark waves of the sea
Draw in and out of rocky rifts
Calling solemnly to thee,

* The Sirens

With voices deep and hollow —
To the shore
Follow! O follow!
To be at rest for evermore!
For evermore!
Look how the gray, old Ocean
From the depths of his heart rejoices,
Heaving with a gentle motion,
When he hears our restful voices;
List how he sings in an undertone,
Chiming with our melody;
And all sweet sounds of earth and air
Melt into one low voice alone,
That murmurs over the weary sea —
And seems to sing from everywhere —
“Here mayest thou harbour peace-
fully,
Here mayest thou rest from the aching
oar;
Turn thy curvèd prow ashore

The Sirens ❀

And in our green isle rest for ever-
more !

For evermore ! ”

And Echo half wakes in the wooded
hill,

And, to her heart so calm and deep,
Murmurs over in her sleep,
Doubtfully pausing and murmuring
still,

“ Evermore ! ”

Thus, on Life's weary sea,
Heareth the marinere
Voices sweet, from far and near,
Ever singing low and clear,
Ever singing longingly.

Is it not better here to be,
Than to be toiling late and soon ?
In the dreary night to see
Nothing but the blood-red moon

* The Sirens

Go up and down into the sea ;
Or, in the loneliness of day,
To see the still seals only,
Solemnly lift their faces gray,
Making it yet more lonely ?
Is it not better, than to hear
Only the sliding of the wave
Beneath the plank, and feel so near
A cold and lonely grave,
A restless grave, where thou shalt
lie
Even in death unquietly ?
Look down beneath thy wave-worn
bark,
Lean over the side and see
The leaden eye of the side-long shark
Upturned patiently
Ever waiting there for thee :
Look down and see those shapeless
forms,

The Sirens ❀

Which ever keep their dreamless
sleep

Far down within the gloomy deep
And only stir themselves in storms,
Rising like islands from beneath,
And snorting through the angry spray,
As the frail vessel perisheth
In the whirls of their unwieldly play ;

Look down ! Look down !

Upon the seaweed, slimy and dark,
That waves its arms so lank and brown,
Beckoning for thee !

Look down beneath thy wave-worn bark
Into the cold depth of the sea !

Look down ! Look down !

Thus, on Life's lonely sea,
Heareth the marinere
Voices sad from far and near,
Ever singing full of fear,
Ever singing drearily.

The Sirens

Here all is pleasant as a dream ;
The wind scarce shaketh down the dew,
The green grass floweth like a stream

Into the ocean's blue :

Listen ! O listen !

Here is a gush of many streams,
A song of many birds,
And every wish and longing seems
Lulled to a numbered flow of
words —

Listen ! O listen !

Here ever hum the golden bees
Underneath full-blossomed trees,
At once with glowing fruit and flower
crowned ;

The sand is so smooth, the yellow
sand,

That thy keel will not grate, as it
touches the land ;

All around, with a slumberous sound,

The Sirens ❀

The singing waves slide up the strand,
And there, where the smooth wet
pebbles be,

The waters gurgle longingly,
As if they fain would seek the shore,
To be at rest from the ceaseless roar,
To be at rest for evermore —

For evermore.

Thus on Life's gloomy sea,
Heareth the marinere
Voices sweet, far and near,
Ever singing in his ear,
“Here is rest and peace for thee!”

Rhœcus

GOD sends his teachers unto every
age,
To every clime, and every race of men,
With revelations fitted to their growth
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm
of Truth
Into the selfish rule of one sole race :
Therefore each form of worship that
hath swayed
The life of man, and given it to grasp
The master-key of knowledge, rever-
ence,
Enfolds some germs of goodness and of
right ;
Else never had the eager soul, which
loathes

*** Rhœcus**

The slothful down of pampered igno-
rance,
Found in it even a moment's fitful rest.

There is an instinct in the human
heart
Which makes that all the fables it
hath coined,
To justify the reign of its belief
And strengthen it by beauty's right
divine,
Veil in their inner cells a mystic gift,
Which, like the hazel twig, in faithful
hands,
Points surely to the hidden springs of
truth.
For, as in nature naught is made in
vain,
But all things have within their hull of
use

Rhœcus ❀

A wisdom and a meaning which may
speak

Of spiritual secrets to the ear

Of spirit ; so, in whatsoe'er the heart

Hath fashioned for a solace to itself,

To make its inspirations suit its creed,

And from the niggard hands of falsehood wring

Its needful food of truth, there ever is

A sympathy with Nature, which reveals,

Not less than her own works, pure
gleams of light

And earnest parables of inward lore.

Hear now this fairy legend of old
Greece,

As full of freedom, youth and beauty
still

As the immortal freshness of that grace
Carved for all ages on some Attic frieze.

✱ Rhœcus

A youth named Rhœcus, wandering
in the wood,
Saw an old oak just trembling to its
fall,
And feeling pity of so fair a tree,
He propped its gray trunk with admir-
ing care,
And with a thoughtless footstep loitered
on.
But, as he turned, he heard a voice
behind
That murmured, "Rhœcus!" 'Twas
as if the leaves,
Stirred by a passing breath, had mur-
mured it,
And, while he paused bewildered, yet
again
It murmured, "Rhœcus!" softer than
a breeze.
He started and beheld with dizzy eyes

Rhœcus ❀

What seemed the substance of a happy
dream

Stand there before him, spreading a
warm glow

Within the green glooms of the shad-
owy oak.

It seemed a woman's shape, yet all too
fair

To be a woman, and with' eyes too
meek

For any that were wont to mate with
gods.

All naked like a goddess stood she there,
And like a goddess all too beautiful
To feel the guilt-born earthliness of
shame.

"Rhœcus, I am the Dryad of this
tree,"

Thus she began, dropping her low-
toned words

✻ Rhœcus

Serene, and full, and clear, as drops
of dew,
“And with it I am doomed to live and
die;
The rain and sunshine are my caterers,
Nor have I other bliss than simple
life;
Now ask me what thou wilt, that I can
give,
And with a thankful joy it shall be
thine.”

Then Rhœcus, with a flutter at the
heart,
Yet, by the promptings of such beauty,
bold,
Answered: “What is there that can
satisfy
The endless craving of the soul but
love?”

Rhœcus ❄

Give me thy love, or but the hope of
that

Which must be evermore my spirit's
goal."

After a little pause she said again,
But with a glimpse of sadness in her
tone,

"I give it, Rhœcus, though a perilous
gift;

An hour before the sunset meet me
here."

And straightway there was nothing he
could see

But the green glooms beneath the
shadowy oak,

And not a sound came to his straining
ears

But the low trickling rustle of the leaves,
And far away upon an emerald slope
The falter of an idle shepherd's pipe.

✱ Rhœcus

Now in those days of simpleness and
faith,
Men did not think that happy things
were dreams
Because they overstepped the narrow
bourne
Of likelihood, but reverently deemed
Nothing too wondrous or too beautiful
To be the guerdon of a daring
heart.
So Rhœcus made no doubt that he was
blest,
And all along unto the city's gate
Earth seemed to spring beneath him as
he walked,
The clear, broad sky looked bluer than
its wont,
And he could scarce believe he had not
wings,

Rhœcus ❄

Such sunshine seemed to glitter through
his veins
Instead of blood, so light he felt and
strange.

Young Rhœcus had a faithful heart
enough,
But one that in the present dwelt too
much,
And, taking with blithe welcome what-
soe'er
Chance gave of joy, was wholly bound
in that,
Like the contented peasant of a vale,
Deemed it the world, and never looked
beyond.
So haply meeting in the afternoon
Some comrades who were playing at
the dice;
He joined them, and forgot all else beside.

✱ Rhœcus

The dice were rattling at the merri-
est,
And Rhœcus, who had met but sorry
luck,
Just laughed in triumph at a happy
throw,
When through the room there hummed
a yellow bee
That buzzed about his ear with down-
drooped legs
As if to light. And Rhœcus laughed
and said,
Feeling how red and flushed he was
with loss,
“By Venus! does he take me for a
rose?”
And brushed him off with rough, im-
patient hand,
But still the bee came back, and thrice
again,

Rhœcus ❀

Rhœcus did beat him off with growing
wrath.

Then through the window flew the
wounded bee,

And Rhœcus, tracking him with angry
eyes,

Saw a sharp mountain-peak of Thessaly
Against the red disk of the setting
sun, —

And instantly the blood sank from his
heart,

As if its very walls had caved away.

Without a word, he turned, and, rush-
ing forth,

Ran madly through the city and the gate,
And o'er the plain, which now the
wood's long shade,

By the low sun thrown forward broad
and dim,

Darkened well-nigh unto the city's wall.

✱ Rhæcus

Quite spent and out of breath he
reached the tree,
And, listening fearfully, he heard once
more
The low voice murmur "Rhæcus!"
close at hand;
Whereat he looked around him, but
could see
Naught but the deepening glooms be-
neath the oak.
Then sighed the voice, "O Rhæcus!
nevermore
Shalt thou behold me or by day or
night,
Me, who would fain have blessed thee
with a love
More ripe and bounteous than ever yet
Filled up with nectar any mortal heart:
But thou didst scorn my humble mes-
senger,

Rhæcus ❀

And sent'st him back to me with
 bruised wings,
We spirits only show to gentle eyes,
We ever ask an undivided love,
And he who scorns the least of Nature's
 works
Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from
 all,
Farewell ! for thou canst never see me
 more ! ”

Then Rhæcus beat his breast, and
 groaned aloud,
And cried, “ Be pitiful ! forgive me
 yet
This once, and I shall never need it
 more ? ”
“ Alas ! ” the voice returned, “ 'tis thou
 art blind,
Not I unmerciful ; I can forgive,

✱ Rhœcus

But have no skill to heal thy spirit's
eyes;

Only the soul hath power o'er itself."

With that again there murmured
"Nevermore!"

And Rhœcus after heard no other
sound,

Except the rattling of the oak's crisp
leaves,

Like the long surf upon a distant
shore,

Raking the sea-worn pebbles up and
down.

The night had gathered round him;
o'er the plain

The city sparkled with its thousand
lights,

And sounds of revel fell upon his ear
Harshly and like a curse; above, the
sky,

Rhœcus ❀

With all its bright sublimity of stars,
Deepened and on his forehead smote
the breeze :

Beauty was all around him and delight,
But from that eve he was alone on
earth.

So in our youth we shape out noble
ends,

And worship beauty with such earnest
faith

As but the young, unwasted heart can
know,

And, haply wandering into some good
deed,

Win for our souls a moment's sight of
Truth.

Then the sly world runs up to us and
smiles,

✻ Rhœcus

And takes us by the hand and cries,
“ Well met !

Come play with me at dice ; one lucky
throw,

And all my power and glory shall be
thine ;

Stake but thy heart upon the other
side ! ”

So we turn gaily in, and by degrees
Lose all our nature’s broad inheri-
tance, —

The happiness content with homely
things, —

The wise simplicity of honest faith, —
The unsuspecting gentleness of
heart, —

The open-handed grace of Charity, —
The love of Beauty, and the deathless
hope

To be her chosen almoner on earth.

Rhœcus ❄

And we rise up at last with wrinkled
brows,
Most deeply-learned in the hollow
game
At which we now have nothing left
to stake,
Albeit too wise to stake it, if we had.

But Truth will never let the heart
alone
That once hath sought her, sending
o'er and o'er
Her sweet and unreproachful messen-
gers
To lure us back again and give us
all,
Which we, all fresh and burning in
the game,
Wherein we lose and lose with seem-
ing gain,

✻ Rhœcus

Brush off impatiently with sharp re-
buff,

Feeling our better instincts now no
more

But as reproaches lacking other aim
Than to abridge our little snatch of
bliss,

And, when we rouse at length, and
feel within

The stirring of our ancient love
again,

Our eyes are blinded that we cannot
see

The fair benignity of unveiled Truth
That plighted us its holy troth ere-
while

Our sun is setting. We are just too
late;

And so, instead of lightening by our
lives

Rhœcus ❧

The general burden of our drooping
kind —

Instead of being named in aftertime
With grateful reverence as men who
talked

With spirits, and the dreaded secret
wrung

From out the loath lips of the sphinx
of life, —

Instead of being, as all true men may,
Part of the memory of all great deeds,
The inspiration of all time to come,
We linger to our graves with empty
hearts,

And add our little handful to the soil
As valueless and frail as fallen leaves.

An Indian-summer Reverie

WHAT visionary tints the
year puts on,
When falling leaves falter through
motionless air
Or numbly cling and shiver to be
gone !
How shimmer the low flats and
pastures bare,
As with her nectar Hebe Autumn
fills
The bowl between me and those
distant hills,
And smiles and shakes abroad her misty,
tremulous hair !

*** An Indian-summer Reverie**

No more the landscape holds its
wealth apart,
Making me poorer in my poverty,
But mingles with my senses and
my heart ;
My own projected spirit seems to
me
In her own reverie the world to
steep ;
'Tis she that waves to sympathetic
sleep,
Moving, as she is moved, each field
and hill and tree.

How fuse and mix, with what
unfelt degrees,
Clasped by the faint horizon's lan-
guid arms,
Each into each, the hazy dis-
tances !

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

The softened season all the land-
scape charms ;
Those hills, my native village that
embay,
In waves of dreamier purple roll
away,
And floating in mirage seem all the
glimmering farms.

Far distant sounds the hidden
chickadee
Close at my side ; far distant sound
the leaves ;
The fields seem fields of dream,
where Memory
Wanders like gleaning Ruth ; and
as the sheaves
Of wheat and barley wavered in
the eye

✱ An Indian-summer Reverie

Of Boaz as the maiden's glow
went by,
So tremble and seem remote all things
the sense receives.

The cock's shrill trump that tells
of scattered corn,
Passed breezily on by all his flapping
mates,
Faint and more faint, from barn
to barn is borne,
Southward, perhaps to far Magellan's
Straits ;
Dimly I catch the throb of distant
flails ;
Silently overhead the hen-hawk
sails,
With watchful, measuring eye, and for
his quarry waits.

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

The sobered robin, hunger-silent
now,
Seeks cedar-berries blue, his autumn
cheer ;
The squirrel, on the shingly shag-
bark's bough,
Now saws, now lists with downward
eye and ear,
Then drops his nut, and with a
chipping bound
Whisks to his winding fastness
underground ;
The clouds like swans drift down the
streaming atmosphere.

O'er yon bare knoll the pointed
cedar shadows
Drowse on the crisp, gray moss ; the
ploughman's call

✱ An Indian-summer Reverie

Creeps faint as smoke from black,
fresh-furrowed meadows ;
The single crow a single caw lets fall ;
And all around me every bush and
tree
Says Autumn's here, and Winter
soon will be,
Who snows his soft, white sleep and
silence over all.

The birch, most shy and ladylike
of trees,
Her poverty, as best she may, re-
trieves,
And hints at her foregone gentili-
ties
With some saved relics of her wealth
of leaves ;
The swamp-oak, with his royal
purple on,

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Glares red as blood across the
sinking sun,
As one who prouder to a falling fortune
cleaves.

He looks a sachem, in red blanket
wrapt,
Who, mid some council of the sad-
garbed whites,
Erect and stern, in his own memories
lapt,
With distant eye broods over other
sights,
Sees the hushed wood the city's
flare replace,
The wounded turf heal o'er the
railway's trace,
And roams the savage Past of his un-
dwindled rights.

✱ An Indian-summer Reverie

The red-oak, softer-grained, yields
all for lost,
And, with his crumpled foliage stiff
and dry,
After the first betrayal of the
frost,
Rebuffs the kiss of the relenting sky ;
The chestnuts, lavish of their long-
hid gold,
To the faint summer, beggared
now and old,
Pour back the sunshine hoarded 'neath
her favouring eye.

The ash her purple drops forgiv-
ingly
And sadly, breaking not the general
hush ;
The maple-swamps glow like a
sunset sea,

An Indian-summer Reverie ❁

Each leaf a ripple with its separate
flush ;
And round the wood's edge creeps
the skirting blaze
Of bushes low, as when on cloudy
days,
Ere the rain falls, the cautious farmer
burns his brush.

O'er yon low wall, which guards
one unkempt zone,
Where vines and weeds and scrub-
oaks intertwine
Safe from the plough, whose
rough, discordant stone
Is massed to one soft gray by lichens
fine,
The tangled blackberry, crossed
and recrossed, weaves

* An Indian-summer Reverie

A prickly network of ensanguined
leaves ;
Hard by, with coral beads, the prim
black-alders shine.

Pillaring with flame this crum-
bling boundary,
Whose loose blocks topple 'neath the
ploughboy's foot,
Who, with each sense shut fast
except the eye,
Creeps close and scares the jay he
hoped to shoot,
The woodbine up the elm's
straight stem aspires,
Coiling it, harmless, with au-
tumnal fires ;
In the ivy's paler blaze the martyr oak
stands mute.

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Below, the Charles — a strip of
nether sky,
Now hid by rounded apple-trees
between,
Whose gaps the misplaced sail
sweeps bellying by,
Now flickering golden through a
woodland screen,
Then spreading out, at his next
turn beyond,
A silver circle like an inland
pond —
Slips seaward silently through marshes
purple and green.

Dear marshes! vain to him the
gift of sight
Who cannot in their various incomes
share,

✱ An Indian-summer Reverie

From every season drawn, of shade
and light,
Who sees in them but levels brown
and bare ;
Each change of storm or sunshine
scatters free
On them its largess of variety,
For Nature with cheap means still
works her wonders rare.

In Spring they lie one broad ex-
panse of green,
O'er which the light winds run with
glimmering feet :
Here, yellower stripes track out
the creek unseen,
There, darker growths o'er hidden
ditches meet ;
And purpler stains show where
the blossoms crowd,

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

As if the silent shadow of a
cloud
Hung there becalmed, with the next
breath to fleet.

All round, upon the river's slippery
edge,
Witching to deeper calm the drowsy
tide,
Whispers and leans the breeze-
entangling sedge;
Through emerald glooms the linger-
ing waters slide,
Or, sometimes wavering, throw
back the sun,
And the stiff banks in eddies melt
and run
Of dimpling light, and with the current
seem to glide.

✱ An Indian-summer Reverie

In Summer 'tis a blithesome sight
to see,
As, step by step, with measured
swing, they pass,
The wide-ranked mowers wading
to the knee,
Their sharp scythes panting through
the thick set grass;
Then, stretched beneath a rick's
shade in a ring,
Their nooning take, while one
begins to sing
A stave that droops and dies 'neath the
close sky of brass.

Meanwhile that devil-may-care,
the bobolink,
Remembering duty, in mid-quaver
stops

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Just ere he sweeps o'er rapture's
tremulous brink,
And 'twixt the winrows most de-
murely drops,
A decorous bird of business, who
provides
For his brown mate and fledglings
six besides,
And looks from right to left, a farmer
mid his crops.

Another change subdues them in
the Fall,
But saddens not; they still show
merrier tints,
Though sober russet seems to
cover all;
When the first sunshine through
their dew-drops glints,

* An Indian-summer Reverie

Look how the yellow clearness,
streamed across,
Redeems with rarer hues the
season's loss,
As Dawn's feet there had touched and
left their rosy prints.

Or come when sunset gives its
freshened zest,
Lean o'er the bridge and let the
ruddy thrill,
While the shorn sun swells down
the hazy west,
Glow opposite ; — the marshes drink
their fill
And swoon with purple veins,
then slowly fade
Through pink to brown, as east-
ward moves the shade,

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Lengthening with stealthy creep, of
Simond's darkening hill.

Later, and yet ere Winter wholly
shuts,
Ere through the first dry snow the
runner grates,
And the loath cart-wheel screams
in slippery ruts,
While firmer ice the eager boy
awaits,
Trying each buckle and strap be-
side the fire,
And until bedtime plays with his
desire,
Twenty times putting on and off his
new-bought skates ; —

* An Indian-summer Reverie

Then, every morn, the river's
banks shine bright
With smooth plate-armour, treacher-
ous and frail,
By the frost's clinking hammers
forged at night,
'Gainst which the lances of the sun
prevail,
Giving a pretty emblem of the
day
When guiltier arms in light shall
melt away,
And states shall move free-limbed,
loosed from war's cramping
mail.

And now those waterfalls the
ebbing river
Twice every day creates on either
side

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Tinkle, as through their fresh-
sparred grots they shiver
In grass-arched channels to the sun
denied ;
High flaps in sparkling blue the
far-heard crow,
The silvered flats gleam frostily
below,
Suddenly drops the gull and breaks the
glassy tide.

But crowned in turn by vying
seasons three,
Their winter halo hath a fuller ring ;
This glory seems to rest immov-
ably, —
The others were too fleet and vanish-
ing ;
When the hid tide is at its high-
est flow,

✱ An Indian-summer Reverie

O'er marsh and stream one breath-
less trance of snow
With brooding fulness awes and hushes
everything.

The sunshine seems blown off by
the bleak wind,
As pale as formal candles lit by
day ;
Gropes to the sea the river dumb
and blind ;
The brown ricks, snow-thatched by
the storm in play,
Show pearly breakers combing o'er
their lee,
White crests as of some just
enchanted sea,
Checked in their maddest leap and
hanging poised midway.

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

But when the eastern blow, with
rain aslant,
From mid-sea's prairies green and
rolling plains
Drives in his wallowing herds of
billows gaunt,
And the roused Charles remembers
in his veins
Old Ocean's blood and snaps his
gyves of frost,
That tyrannous silence on the
shores is tost
In dreary wreck, and crumbling desola-
tion reigns.

Edgewise or flat, in Druid-like
device,
With leaden pools between or gullies
bare,

* An Indian-summer Reverie

The blocks lie strewn, a bleak
Stonehenge of ice ;
No life, no sound, to break the grim
despair,
Save sullen plunge, as through the
sedges stiff
Down crackles riverward some
thaw-sapped cliff,
Or when the close-wedged fields of ice
crunch here and there.

But let me turn from fancy-pic-
tured scenes
To that whose pastoral calm before
me lies :
Here nothing harsh or rugged in-
tervenes ;
The early evening with her misty dyes
Smooths off the ravelled edges of
the nigh,



An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Relieves the distant with her
cooler sky,
And tones the landscape down, and
soothes the wearied eyes.

There gleams my native village,
dear to me,
Though higher change's waves each
day are seen,
Whelming fields famed in boy-
hood's history,
Sanding with houses the diminished
green ;
There, in red brick, which soften-
ing time defies,
Stand square and stiff the Muses'
factories ; —
How with my life knit up is every
well-known scene !

* An Indian-summer Reverie

Flow on, dear river ! not alone you
flow
To outward sight, and through your
marshes wind ;
Fed from the mystic springs of
long-ago,
Your twin flows silent through my
world of mind :
Grow dim, dear marshes, in the
evening's gray !
Before my inner sight ye stretch
away,
And will for ever, though these fleshly
eyes grow blind.

Beyond the hillock's house-be-
spotted swell,
Where Gothic chapels house the
horse and chaise,

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Where quiet cits in Grecian temples dwell,
Where Coptic tombs resound with prayer and praise,
Where dust and mud the equal year divide,
There gentle Allston lived, and wrought, and died,
Transfiguring street and shop with his illumined gaze.

Virgilium vidi tantum, — I have seen
But as a boy, who looks alike on all,
That misty hair, that fine Undine-like mien,
Tremulous as down to feeling's faintest call; —
Ah, dear old homestead! count it to thy fame

*** An Indian-summer Reverie**

That thither many times the
Painter came ; —
One elm yet bears his name, a feathery
tree and tall.

Swiftly the present fades in mem-
ory's glow, —
Our only sure possession is the
past ;
The village blacksmith died a
month ago,
And dim to me the forge's roaring
blast ;
Soon fire-new mediævals we shall
see
Oust the black smithy from its
chestnut-tree,
And that hewn down, perhaps, the
beehive green and vast.

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

How many times, prouder than
king on throne,
Loosed from the village school-dame's
A's and B's,
Panting have I the creaky bellows
blown,
And watched the pent volcano's red
increase,
Then paused to see the ponderous
sledge, brought down
By that hard arm voluminous and
brown,
From the white iron swarm its golden
vanishing bees.

Dear native town ! whose choking
elms each year
With eddyng dust before their time
turn gray;

✱ An Indian-summer Reverie

Pining for rain, — to me thy dust
is dear ;
It glorifies the eve of summer day,
And when the westering sun half
sunken burns,
The mote-thick air to deepest
orange turns,
The westward horseman rides through
clouds of gold away.

So palpable, I've seen those un-
shorn few,
The six old willows at the causey's
end
(Such trees Paul Potter never
dreamed nor drew),
Through this dry mist their checker-
ing shadows send,
Striped, here and there, with many
a long-drawn thread,

An Indian-summer Reverie ❀

Where streamed through leafy
chinks the trembling red,
Past which, in one bright trail, the
hangbird's flashes blend.

Yes, dearer far thy dust than all
that e'er,
Beneath the awarded crown of vic-
tory,
Gilded the blown Olympic chari-
oteer ;
Though lightly prized the ribboned
parchments three,
Yet *collegisse juvat*, I am glad
That here what colleging was
mine I had, —
It linked another tie, dear native town,
with thee !

✱ An Indian-summer Reverie

Nearer art thou than simply native
earth,
My dust with thine concedes a deeper
tie ;
A closer claim thy soil may well
put forth,
Something of kindred more than
sympathy ;
For in thy bounds I reverently
laid away
That blinding anguish of forsaken
clay,
That title I seemed to have in earth
and sea and sky,

That portion of my life more
choice to me
(Though brief, yet in itself so round
and whole)

An Indian-summer Reverie ❧

Than all the imperfect residue can
be ; —

The Artist saw his statue of the soul
Was perfect ; so, with one regret-
ful stroke,

The earthen model into frag-
ments broke,

And without her the impoverished
seasons roll.

The Birch-tree

RIPPLING through thy branches
 goes the sunshine,
Among thy leaves that palpitate for ever,
Ovid in thee a pining Nymph had
 prisoned,
The soul once of some tremulous in-
 land river,
Quivering to tell her woe, but ah!
 dumb, dumb for ever!

While all the forest, witchèd with
 slumberous moonshine,
Holds up its leaves in happy, happy
 silence,
Waiting the dew, with breath and pulse
 suspended,

✱ The Birch-tree

I hear afar thy whispering, gleamy
islands,
And track thee wakeful still amid the
wide-hung silence.

Upon the brink of some wood-nestled
lakelet,
Thy foliage, like the tresses of a
Dryad,
Dripping round thy slim, white stem,
whose shadow
Slopes quivering down the water's
dusky quiet,
Thou shrink'st as on her bath's edge
would some startled Dryad.

Thou art the go-between of rustic
lovers ;
Thy white bark has their secrets in its
keeping ;

The Birch-tree ❀

Reuben writes here the happy name of
Patience,
And thy lithe boughs hang murmuring
and weeping
Above her, as she steals the mystery
from thy keeping.

Thou art to me like my belovèd maiden,
So frankly coy, so full of trembly con-
fidences ;
Thy shadow scarce seems shade, thy
pattering leaflets
Sprinkle their gathered sunshine o'er
my senses,
And Nature gives me all her summer
confidences.

Whether my heart with hope or sorrow
tremble,
Thou sympathisest still ; wild and un-
quiet,

✱ The Birch-tree

I fling me down ; thy ripple, like a river,
Flows valleyward, where calmness is,
and by it
My heart is floated down into the land
of quiet.

The Changeling

I HAD a little daughter,
And she was given to me
To lead me gently backward
To the Heavenly Father's knee,
That I, by the force of nature,
Might in some dim wise divine
The depth of his infinite patience
To this wayward soul of mine.

I know not how others saw her,
But to me she was wholly fair,
And the light of the heaven she came
from
Still lingered and gleamed in her hair ;
For it was as wavy and golden,
And as many changes took,

✱ The Changeling

As the shadows of sun-gilt ripples
On the yellow bed of a brook.

To what can I liken her smiling
Upon me, her kneeling lover,
How it leaped from her lips to her
eyelids,
And dimpled her wholly over,
Till her outstretched hands smiled
also,
And I almost seemed to see
The very heart of her mother
Sending sun through her veins to
me!

She had been with us scarce a twelve-
month,
And it hardly seemed a day,
When a troop of wandering angels
Stole my little daughter away ;

The Changeling ❀

Or perhaps those heavenly Zingari
But loosed the hampering strings,
And when they had opened her cage-
door,
My little bird used her wings.

But they left in her stead a changeling,
A little angel child,
That seems like her bud in full blossom,
And smiles as she never smiled :
When I wake in the morning, I see it
Where she always used to lie,
And I feel as weak as a violet
Alone 'neath the awful sky.

As weak, yet as trustful also ;
For the whole year long I see
All the wonders of faithful Nature
Still worked for the love of me ;

✱ The Changeling

Winds wander, and dew drops earth-
ward,
Rain falls, suns rise and set,
Earth whirls, and all but to prosper
A poor little violet.

This child is not mine as the first was,
I cannot sing it to rest,
I cannot lift it up fatherly
And bliss it upon my breast;
Yet it lies in my little one's cradle
And sits in my little one's chair,
And the light of the heaven she's gone to
Transfigures its golden hair.

To the Dandelion

DEAR common flower, that grow'st
beside the way,
Fringing the dusty road with harmless
gold,
First pledge of blithesome May,
Which children pluck, and, full of
pride, uphold,
High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that
they
An Eldorado in the grass have found,
Which not the rich earth's ample
round
May match in wealth — thou art more
dear to me
Than all the prouder Summer-blooms
may be.

✱ To the Dandelion

Gold such as thine ne'er drew the
Spanish prow
Through the primeval hush of Indian
seas,

Nor wrinkled the lean brow
Of age, to rob the lover's heart of ease ;
'Tis the Spring's largess, which she
scatters now

To rich and poor alike, with lavish
hand,

Though most hearts never under-
stand

To take it at God's value, but pass by
The offered wealth with unrewarded
eye.

Thou art my tropics and mine Italy ;
To look at thee unlocks a warmer
clime ;

The eyes thou givest me

To the Dandelion ❀

Are in the heart and heed not space or
time :

Not in mid June the golden-cuirassed
bee

Feels a more Summer-like, warm rav-
ishment

In the white lily's breezy tent,
His conquered Sybaris, than I, when
first

From the dark green thy yellow circles
burst.

Then think I of deep shadows in the
grass, —

Of meadows where in sun the cattle
graze,

Where as the breezes pass,
The gleaming rushes lean a thousand
ways, —

Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,

✱ To the Dandelion

Or whiten in the wind, — of waters
blue

That from the distance sparkle
through

Some woodland gap, — and of a sky
above

Where one white cloud like a stray
lamb doth move.

My childhood's earliest thoughts are
linked with thee ;

The sight of thee calls back the robin's
song,

Who from the dark old tree

Beside the door, sang clearly all day
long,

And I, secure in childish piety,

Listened as if I heard an angel sing

With news from Heaven, which he
did bring

To the Dandelion ❀

Fresh every day to my untainted ears,
When birds and flowers and I were
happy peers.

How like a prodigal doth nature seem,
When thou, for all thy gold, so common art !

Thou teachest me to deem
More sacredly of every human heart,
Since each reflects in joy its scanty
gleam

Of Heaven, and could some wondrous
secret show,

Did we but pay the love we owe,
And with a child's undoubting wisdom
look

On all these living pages of God's
book.

1

2

3

4

The Shepherd of King Admetus

THERE came a youth upon the
earth,

Some thousand years ago,
Whose slender hands were nothing
worth,

Whether to plough, or reap, or sow.

He made a lyre, and drew therefrom
Music so strange and rich,
That all men loved to hear, — and some
Muttered of fagots for a witch.

But King Admetus, one who had
Pure taste by right divine,
Decreed his singing not too bad
To hear between the cups of wine :

✻ The Shepherd of

And so, well-pleased with being soothed
 Into a sweet half-sleep,
Three times his kingly beard he
 smoothed
And made him viceroy o'er his sheep.

His words were simple words enough
 And yet he used them so,
That what in other mouths were rough
In his seemed musical and low.

Men called him but a shiftless youth,
 In whom no good they saw ;
And yet, unwittingly, in truth,
They made his careless words their law.

They knew not how he learned at all,
 For, long hour after hour,
He sat and watched the dead leaves fall,
Or mused upon a common flower.

King Admetus ❄

It seemed the loveliness of things
Did teach him all their use,
For, in mere weeds, and stones, and
springs,
He found a healing power profuse.

Men granted that his speech was wise,
But, when a glance they caught
Of his slim grace and woman's eyes,
They laughed, and called him good-
for-naught.

Yet after he was dead and gone,
And e'en his memory dim,
Earth seemed more sweet to live upon,
More full of love, because of him.

And day by day more holy grew
Each spot where he had trod,
Till after-poets only knew
Their firstborn brother as a god.

An Incident in a Railroad Car

HE spoke of Burns: men rude and
rough

Pressed round to hear the praise of
one

Whose breast was made of manly,
simple stuff,

As homespun as their own.

And, when he read, they forward leaned
Drinking, with thirsty hearts and ears,
His brook-like songs whom glory never
weaned

From humble smiles and tears.

Slowly there grew a tender awe,
Sunlike o'er faces brown and hard,

✻ An Incident in a

As if in him who read they felt and
saw
Some presence of the bard.

It was a sight for sin and wrong,
And slavish tyranny to see,
A sight to make our faith more pure
and strong
In high Humanity.

I thought, these men will carry hence,
Promptings their former life above,
And something of a finer reverence
For beauty, truth, and love.

God scatters love on every side,
Freely among his children all,
And always hearts are lying open wide
Wherein some grains may fall.

Railroad Car ❀

There is no wind but soweth seeds
Of a more true and open life,
Which burst unlooked for into high-
souled deeds
With wayside beauty rife.

We find within these souls of ours
Some wild germs of a higher birth,
Which in the poet's tropic heart bears
flowers
Whose fragrance fills the earth.

Within the hearts of all men lie
These promises of wider bliss,
Which blossom into hopes that cannot
die,
In sunny hours like this.

All that hath been majestic
In life or death since time began,

✱ An Incident in a

Is native in the simple heart of all,
The angel heart of man.

And thus among the untaught poor
Great deeds and feelings find a home
That cast in shadow all the golden lore
Of classic Greece or Rome.

Oh! mighty brother-soul of man,
Where'er thou art, in low or high,
Thy skyey arches with exulting span
O'er-roof infinity.

All thoughts that mould the age begin
Deep down within the primitive soul,
And, from the many, slowly upward
win
To One who grasps the whole.

In his broad breast, the feeling deep
That struggled on the many's tongue,

Railroad Car ❄

Swells to a tide of Thought whose
surges leap
O'er the weak thrones of wrong.

All thought begins in feeling — wide
In the great mass its base is hid,
And, narrowing up to thought, stands
glorified,
A moveless pyramid.

Nor is he far astray who deems
That every hope which rises and
grows broad
In the World's heart, by ordered im-
pulse streams
From the great heart of God.

God wills, man hopes ; in common
souls
Hope is but vague and undefined,

✻ An Incident in a

Till from the poet's tongue the message
rolls,
A blessing to his kind.

Never did poesy appear
So full of Heav'n to me as when
I saw how it would pierce through
pride and fear,
To the lives of coarsest men.

It may be glorious to write
Thoughts that shall glad the two or
three
High souls, like those far stars that
come in sight
Once in a century.

But better far it is to speak
One simple word which now and
then

Railroad Car ❀

Shall waken their free nature in the
weak

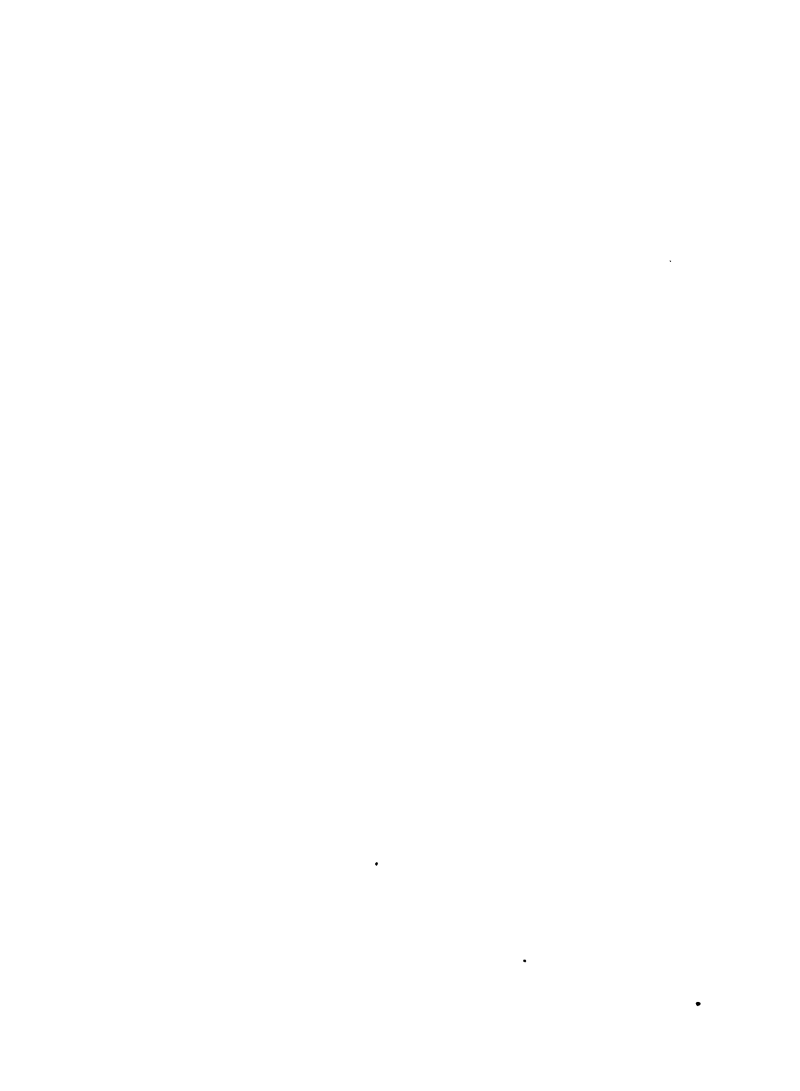
And friendless sons of men ;

To write some earnest verse or line
Which, seeking not the praise of Art,
Shall make a clearer faith and manhood
shine

In the uncultured heart.

He who doth this, in verse or prose,
May be forgotten in his day,
But surely shall be crowned at last with
those

Who live and speak for aye.



A Reverie

IN the twilight deep and silent
Comes thy spirit unto mine,
When the starlight and the moonlight
Over cliff and woodland shine.
And the quiver of the river
Seems a thrill of joy benign.

Then I rise and go in fancy
To the headland by the sea,
When the evening star throbs setting
Through the dusky cedar-tree,
And from under, low-voiced thunder
From the surf swells fitfully.

Then within my soul I feel thee
Like a gleam of bygone years,
Visions of my childhood murmur

✱ A Reverie

Their old madness in my ears,
Till the pleasance of thy presence
Crowds my heart with blissful tears.

All the wondrous dreams of boyhood —
All youth's fiery thirst of praise —
All the surer hopes of manhood
Blossoming in sadder days —
Joys that bound me, griefs that crowned
me
With a better wreath than bays —

All the longings after freedom —
The vague love of human kind,
Wandering far and near at random
Like a dead leaf on the wind —
Rousing only in the lonely
Twilight of an aimless mind, —

All of these, oh best beloved,
Happiest present dreams and past,

A Reverie ❀

In thy love find safe fulfilment,
Ripened into truths at last ;
Faith and beauty, hope and duty
To one centre gather fast.

How my spirit, like an ocean,
At the breath of thine awakes,
Leaps its shores in mad exulting
And in foamy music breaks,
Then downsinking, lieth shrinking
At the tumult that it makes !

Blazing Hesperus hath sunken
Low within the pale-blue west,
And with blazing splendour crowneth
The horizon's piny crest ;
Thoughtful quiet stills the riot
Of wild longing in my breast.

Home I loiter through the moonlight,
Underneath the quivering trees,

✱ A Reverie

Which, as if a spirit stirred them,
Sway and bend, till by degrees
The far surge's murmur merges
In the rustle of the breeze.

Summer Storm

UNTREMULOUS in the river
clear,
Toward the sky's image, hangs the
imaged bridge ;
So still the air that I can hear
The slender clarion of the unseen
midge ;
Out of the stillness, with a gathering
creep,
Like rising wind in leaves, which now
decreases,
Now lulls, now swells, and all the while
increases,
The huddling trample of a drove of
sheep

✱ Summer Storm

Tilts the loose planks, and then as
gradually ceases

In dust on the other side ; life's em-
blem deep,

A confused noise between two silences,
Finding at last in dust precarious peace.

On the wide marsh the purple-blos-
somed grasses

Soak up the sunshine ; sleeps the
brimming tide,

Save when the wedge-shaped wake in
silence passes

Of some slow water-rat, whose
sinuous glide

Wavers the long green sedge's shade
from side to side ;

But up the west, like a rock-shivered
surge,

Climbs a great cloud edged with sun-
whitened spray ;

Summer Storm ❄

Huge whirls of foam boil toppling o'er
its verge,
And falling still it seems, and yet it
climbs away.

Suddenly all the sky is hid
As with the shutting of a lid,
One by one great drops are falling
Doubtful and slow,
Down the pane they are crookedly
crawling
And the wind breathes low ;
Slowly the circles widen on the river,
Widen and mingle, one and all ;
Here and there the slenderer flowers
shiver,
Struck by an icy rain-drop's fall.

Now on the hills I hear the thunder mutter
The wind is gathering in the west ;

✱ Summer Storm

The upturned leaves first whiten and
flutter,

Then droop to a fitful rest ;
Up from the stream with sluggish flap
Struggles the gull and floats away ;
Nearer and nearer rolls the thunder-
clap,—

We shall not see the sun go down
to-day :

Now leaps the wind on the sleepy marsh,
And tramples the grass with terrified
feet,

The startled river turns leaden and
harsh,

You can hear the quick heart of the
tempest beat.

Look ! look ! that livid flash !
And instantly follows the rattling thun-
der,

Summer Storm ❀

As if some cloud-crag split asunder.
 Fell, splintering with a ruinous
 crash,
On the Earth, which crouches in
 silence under ;
 And now a solid gray wall of rain
Shuts off the landscape, mile by
 mile ;
 For a breath's space I see the blue
 wood again,
And ere the next heart-beat, the wind-
 hurled pile,
 That seemed but now a league
 aloof,
 Bursts rattling o'er the sun-parched
 roof ;
Against the windows the storm comes
 dashing,
Through tattered foliage the hail tears
 crashing,

✱ Summer Storm

The blue lightning flashes,
The rapid hail clashes,
The white waves are tumbling,
And in one baffled roar,
Like the toothless sea mumbling
A rock-bristled shore,
The thunder is rumbling
And crashing and crumbling, —
Will silence return nevermore ?

Hush ! Still as death,
The tempest holds his breath
As from a sudden will ;
The rain stops short, but from the eaves
You see it drop, and hear it from the
leaves,
All is so bodingly still ;
Again, now, now, again
Plashes the rain in heavy gout,
The crinkled lightning

Summer Storm ❄

Seems ever brightening,
And loud and long
Again the thunder shouts
His battle-song, —
One quivering flash,
One wildering crash,
Followed by silence dead and dull,
As if the cloud, let go,
Leapt bodily below
To whelm the earth in one mad over-
throw,
And then a total lull.

Gone, gone, so soon !
No more my half-crazed fancy
there,
Can shape a giant in the air,
No more I see his streaming hair,
The writhing portent of his form ; —
The pale and quiet moon

*** Summer Storm**

**Makes her calm forehead bare,
And the last fragments of the storm,
Like shattered rigging from a fight at
 sea,
Silent and few, are drifting over me.**

THE END.

